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What Does Quebec Want? The *Hockey Sweater* as Canadian Identity: A Contemporary Reading

Sandra Chang-Kredl

The Hockey Sweater/Le chandail de hockey (1979) is a story that has become a part of Canada's national identity. Its film and book versions appear in elementary school classrooms across Canada and a representation from the story is reprinted on our federal currency. The representation includes an illustration of a child playing hockey while wearing a sweater with Maurice Richard's number 9 and an excerpt in French and English:

Les hivers de mon enfance étaient des saisons longues, longues. Nous vivons en trois lieux: l'école, l'église et la patinoire, mais la vraie vie était sur la patinoire.

The winters of my childhood were long, long seasons. We lived in three places—the school, the church, and the skating rink—but our real life was on the skating rink.

This excerpt and scene from *The Hockey Sweater* represent a stereotypical Canada, characterized by its long, cold winters and its pride in winter sports—with a small nod to education and religion. But the Canada that is being represented by *The Hockey Sweater* is more ambivalent than this. In reading the story on a political level, one finds that Canada is characterized not only by its cold winters and hockey, but by its complex cultural history defined by linguistic conflicts between its French and English citizens. My purpose in this article is to speculate on the different readings of Canadian identity that this story offers.

In particular, my analysis of *The Hockey Sweater* considers the story's impact on Canadian identity today. A text includes not only its construction and content, but also its situated reading. Texts live on in different times, so that while *The Hockey Sweater* may be, on one level, an author's childhood recollection of the 1940s, "the texts and artifacts of the past are objects in our present-day world," and readers today interpret historical meanings by way of their "present-day notions" (Lemke, 1995, p. 28). I also use excerpts from Carrier's (2002) biography of Maurice Richard *Our Lives With the Rocket: The Maurice Richard Story*—which

I consider to be an extended version of *The Hockey Sweater*—to further situate my analysis.

Background

Three dates are significant in my reading: the 1940s, during which time the story is situated; the 1970s, when the story was written; and the 2000s, the present years with the Canadian government issuing a representation of the story on its national currency.

Notable Québec author Roch Carrier wrote *The Hockey Sweater* during the ascension of the Québec political party *Parti Québécois*'s sovereignty movement in the late 1970s. Carrier created the story in response to a question posed to him by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (C): "What does Québec want?" (CBC Archives). He set his story in the 1940s, a period known as the pre-Quiet Revolution in Québec, "la grande noirceur" (The Great Darkness) (see Gravenor, 2004), when the Catholic Church and the Anglophone community held positions of cultural and economic dominance.

Jumping forward to 2002, the Canadian government printed representations of themes of Canadian national identity on its currency bills: depictions of "Canadian culture, history, and achievements" (Bank of Canada). The representation from *The Hockey Sweater* is on the Canadian five dollar bill.

Québec Politics: "The Two Solitudes"

In this Canada that their ancestors discovered, the French Canadians are the servants, the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The language of their ancestors, their language, is looked down on. Winning the Stanley Cup is a proud revenge.

—Roch Carrier (2002), *Our Lives With the Rocket*, p. 70

Referring in the above quote to the Montreal Canadiens' 1944 Stanley Cup victory, Carrier positions the French Canadian in that time as oppressed by both the English Canadians and the Roman Catholic Church. Roch Carrier described *The Hockey Sweater* as a memoir of his childhood days in the 1940s pre-Quiet Revolution.

During the 1970s, followers of René Levesque's *Parti Québécois* supported the movement for the province of Québec to attain an independent state from Canada. The point, according to Louise Beaudoin, former minister for the Charter of the French Language, was that French Canadians viewed Québec as the only place in an Anglophone-dominated country where they could live in a French-speaking society, with their own economic, social and cultural governance (CBC Archives, 1988). Non-Francophone Québécois and the rest of Canada openly resisted the sovereignty movement, including the *Parti Québécois*'s Charter of French Language (Bill 101), which made French the only official language in Québec, thereby excluding English and other non-francophone languages on all signs and in all businesses.

Two referendums were held in Québec, in 1980 and 1995, and both times the

separation movement was voted down (by 60% of the electorate in 1980, and by a slim 50.6% in 1995). Today, with 80.1% of Québec citizens native French-speakers and 7.8 % English-speakers, there is a general acceptance that French is the official language of Québec (Statistics Canada, 2006 census). The Liberal Party has a minority government and the Parti Québécois was voted in third place in the last provincial election, its lowest status since 1973. Discussion has taken a turn to Francophone families, worried about their children thriving in a global economy and asking for more English instruction in French schools. This year, Quebec's Ministry of Education responded by increasing English instruction to Francophone children.

The Hockey Sweater

The Hockey Sweater was originally published in French in 1979 in a collection of short stories by Carrier. The story was translated later that year into English by Sheila Fischman. A year later, the National Film Board of Canada adapted the story into a short film animation, directed by Sheldon Cohen and narrated in both French and English by Carrier. In 1984, the book was adapted into its picture book version.

Roch Carrier's protagonist in *The Hockey Sweater* is a young boy who isn't aware of the cultural and linguistic tensions in his society. His world revolves around hockey and his hero, Maurice Richard. What the boy and his friends want is to be Maurice Richard. On the other hand, the author creates a clever metaphor of society through hockey and Maurice Richard. Richard is the icon of hope and power for French Nationalism, a Québécois hero, in an Anglophone-dominated country.

The story is set in 1946 in Ste. Justine, a small rural town in Québec. It is narrated as a recollection of the winter of the author's tenth year. The children's lives revolve around religion, schooling, and hockey, but mostly hockey. The boy Roch and his friends worship Maurice Richard, emulating him in appearance and style, and dream of playing like him.

One day, Roch discovers that he has outgrown his worn-out Montreal Canadiens sweater (with Maurice Richard's number 9), so his mother writes a letter to the Eaton company to order a new sweater. The package arrives, but instead of a Montreal Canadiens sweater, Eaton's has sent a Toronto Maple Leafs sweater. The boy is devastated and, at first, refuses to wear the Toronto sweater. Eventually, though, he succumbs to his mother's argument that the English-speaking Monsieur Eaton would be offended by this request to change the Toronto sweater, and then he would have no sweater to wear at all.

When Roch, with much hesitation and shame, shows up to the rink wearing the Toronto Maple Leafs sweater, his captain won't let him play. In the third period, Roch loses his temper (saying "This is persecution!") and breaks his stick on the ice. He is chastised and sent to the church where he prays to God "to send, as quickly as possible, moths that would eat up my Toronto Maple Leafs sweater" (p. 81).

Textual Analysis

Stories help us make sense of our realities. Lévi-Strauss proposed that humans use stories instead of stating what they mean directly to express their unconscious wishes in coded statements (see Paz, 1970). How does *The Hockey Sweater* contribute to our making sense of Canada's realities? Is it possible to uncover the unconscious wishes expressed in the story?

In this next section, I continue looking at the political messages in *The Hockey Sweater* through a textual reading of three scenes from its film version (*The Sweater*, dir: Sheldon Cohen, 1980). Textual analysis is a description or "a restating of the content of the signs, or the underlying structures," responding to the question: "how does the text/message represent the world through codes?" (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005, p. 186). Readings of any text are necessarily contingent and relative, colored by the reader's cultural background, history, and biases. As such, the focus of my reading is selective, not exhaustive or objective, rather "inherently plural and shifting" (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005, p. 192).

In terms of positioning myself as reader culturally and historically, I grew up in Montreal, Québec in the 1970s and, as an Anglophone child living in a first-generation immigrant family, I remember the impalpable but formidable animosity, tension, and sense of insecurity that reverberated around issues of language: English and French, the "two solitudes" where Anglophones and Francophones could hardly tolerate one another. During the late 1970s-early 1980s Québec Anglophone diaspora, I didn't understand why the English-speaking Québécois were moving to Toronto, or why the French-speaking Québécois wanted with such passion to have only French signs up on buildings. *The Hockey Sweater* provides an allegorical account of these cultural and linguistic tensions.

In the first film sequence, I consider the introductory sequence to *The Hockey Sweater*, in which Québec is depicted as a traditional Canadian rural setting.

Film sequence I: Opening scene 0:04-1:03

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
0:04	NFB title page	traditional French-Canadian music
0:09	EXT. snowy rural landscape: cabins, evergreen trees, maple trees, snow.	[music cont.]
0:15	Train approaches crossing and stops for a horse-drawn carriage to cross the track. Camera follows carriage to a sign in front of town.	[music cont.] [sounds of horse hoofs]
0:31	Close up of sign with town in background	

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
0:33	The sign shows that we are in Ste. Justine, Québec with a population of 1200 [fade out]	[music cont.] Voice-over: When I was a boy growing up in a small village in Quebec —
0:36	Fade to EXT. church	two events were mandatory: the mass —
0:40	Fade to INT. church, curate reading	on Sunday —
	The curate looks at his watch, turns on his radio, signs a cross over his heart.	and the Saturday night hockey game!
0:49	Curate shuts his bible and listens intently to the hockey game	[sounds of hockey game being broadcast]
0:50	Fade to INT. restaurant: bartenders, waiters and patrons listen to the game.	[on radio] ...au Canadiens. Blake, Mosdell, et Richard —
0:55	Fade to INT. living room: a couple on a couch stop kissing so that the man can listen to the game.	Voila la mise-au-jeu. La caoutchouc passe a Mosdell de Toe Blake —
1:03	Fade to INT. Roch's kitchen: family members sewing, cleaning, drinking while listening to the game being broadcast on the radio.	a la troisieme periode et c'est toujours les Canadiens 2, Toronto 2
1:08	Camera pans to living room and zooms in to Roch lying on his stomach, absorbed in the game	[broadcast continues]
1:15	Cut to close-up of Roch, then to radio	Maurice Richard lance et conte!
1:27	Roch runs in circles then up the stairway, cheering	
1:33	Cut to Roch's bedroom. Roch opens his closet and grabs his Maurice Richard sweater out as the broadcaster announces Maurice Richard's goal. Roch jumps on his	

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
	bed holding his number 9 sweater to his chest.	
1:40	Cut to family room. Plaster falls on Roch's family below, as they look up.	[sounds of radio broadcast fade out as the film's theme music, as earlier, fades in]

Reading

The introduction to the film offers a portrait of a traditional and stereotypical rural Québec culture in 1946: the snow, the cabin, the music, the trees, the horse-drawn carriage, the church, and the widespread obsession with hockey. One could argue that this is the portrait that is depicted on the back of the Canadian five-dollar bill and I would expect what is taken from the story when viewed in schools: long winters and “three places—the school, the church, and the skating rink—but our real life was on the skating rink.” On this level, the story *can* be all about winters and hockey.

The French-Canadian folk music, composed by Normand Roger, features a fiddle, piano, percussion, and harmonica. The opening music is a jig in a major key, denoting happiness, joy and hope. In both the English and French versions of the film, the author, Roch Carrier, narrates the story and in both versions, the sound and lilt of his French-Canadian accent effectively transports the viewer/listener into 1970s Québec culture. The sounds of the Saturday night hockey game, Montreal Canadiens versus Toronto Maple Leafs, being broadcast over the radio enters into and becomes a part of the traditional setting.

The style of the film animation has a cartoonish, shaky feel, with a sense of long-ago. The exceptions are two realistically-drawn depictions: Maurice Richard and the Eaton's catalogue. These realistic images can be read as true in the sense of history—Maurice Richard *was* a famous hockey player and the Eaton's catalogue *was* ever-present in Canadian homes. The cartoonish animation can be read as Roch's childhood recollection, part fantasy and part invention.

Recalling the opening narration of the story—“our real life was on the skating rink”—makes hockey the most significant allegory of the story, a metaphor that is used to make sense of political tensions in Québec and Canada: two opposing teams, one winner and one loser, a referee representing the law (in this case the curate representing religion), and the hero. The Montreal Canadiens were considered a dynasty in both the 1940s and the 1970s. The Canadiens' defeat of the Maple Leafs sets up the binary between English and French Canada that comes through in the rest of the story.

The opening sequence sets up the importance of tradition to French Canadian culture. Today, the adage “Je me souviens” (meaning “I remember”) is printed on

Québec's license plates (Act 14 Québec). The exact meaning of this phrase was never specified, but for many it has taken on a nationalist meaning, as in "I remember my French history and heritage" or even, "I remember what the English did to the French" (Act 14 Québec).

In the next sequence I look at a specific representation of the conflict and power between the French Canadians, represented by Roch's mother, and the English Canadians, represented by Monsieur Eaton.

Film sequence II: English dominance, 6:43-7:25

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
6:43	Mid-shot of mother, green background [camera zooms in]	My mother sighed in despair and explained to me,
6:46	Mother sits herself onto a rocking chair.	'If you don't keep this sweater which fits you —
6:49	Rochs forward to reach for an Eaton's catalogue then rocks back	perfectly, I'll —
6:51	Rochs forward pointing at catalogue	have to write to —
6:52	Fade to EXT. industrial building, pink and purple exterior.	Monsieur Eaton and explain that you don't want —
6:53	Very fast pan into building through window, past a storage area, with wooden-paneled floors and two men: one stacking merchandise on a shelf and one pushing merchandise on a trolley, cigarette dangling in mouth. At the end of the long, narrow room, far shot of a room that is red and black	

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
6:55	Zoom quickly into the back room to mid-shot of Monsieur Eaton, sitting at his desk, wearing a bowler hat, a monocle, pouring himself a cup of tea, with two banners of the Toronto Maple Leafs, yellow flowers on the desk, an umbrella hung on the coat-rack behind him.	to wear the Toronto sweater. Monsieur Eaton understands —
6:57	He puts down the pot and reaches for a letter from amongst many on his desk	French perfectly but he's English,
7:01	picks up his cup of tea and starts to read a letter	and he's going to be insulted.'
7:04	M. Eaton sips his tea	[sound of sipping]
7:04	A thought bubble of the Montreal Canadiens logo appears over his head	[sound of game show bing]
	M. Eaton opens his mouth	[sound of gasp and tea cup smashing to the floor]
7:05	Cut to close-up of mother, and she rocks back still holding the Eaton's catalogue	'Do you think he's going to answer us right away —
7:07	Close-up of mother, Cut to mid-shot of Roch (mother's point of view), eyes wide open, arms crossed, green b/g, painting on wall, his shadow behind him, fearful, anxious expression	if he's insulted?

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
7:08	Camera moves back in rocking motion. We see a blue carpet on a wood- paneled floor, an entrance to another room, a side table with a vase of flowers, a mirror, and half a crucifix. Mostly the room is barren.	
7:09	Close up of Roch, still fearful	Spring will come —
7:10	Camera rocks back, and fades into a winter outdoor scene, with snow on tree branches and boys in Montreal Canadiens sweaters playing hockey	before you play a single game,
7:13	The boys slowly morph into cows. Background changes from ice to green grass. Trees lose snow and leaves appear on them	
7:15	Fade to b/g of green in center and grey on outside; one small green leaf is falling down	You did not want to wear — [piano music, single notes gradually lower as leaf falls]
7:16	The leaf sways in the air, gets closer to the camera, turns red	[piano cont.]
7:17:	Leaf turns orange	[piano cont.]
7:18	Leaf turns yellow	that nice blue — [piano cont.]
7:19	Leaf turns white. The leaf fades into the white leaf on Roch's sweater as the Toronto Maple Leaf	sweater.' [piano cont.]

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
	logo (mid-shot). Roch's eyes are closed, his mouth pouts downward and dejectedly	
7:20	Roch's eyes open and he looks down at his Maple Leaf sweater, pulling the sweater up so he can see the Maple Leaf	So, I had to wear – [piano plays film's theme]
7:23	Roch looks at the camera, cringes, places hands on head	the Toronto Maple Leaf sweater. [piano cont.]
7:25	Zoom into Maple Leaf logo on sweater	[piano cont.]
	Fade to black	[piano plays broken chord; chord modulation]

Reading

Again, the historical context of this sequence should be considered when reading this sequence today. Although the Eaton's chain of department stores folded in 1999, the Eaton's company has been described as once "[a] Canadian institution... rooted in the country's cultural landscape," and the largest chain of department stores in Canada (CBC Archives, 2006). Eaton's mail-order catalogue was known as the "Family Bible," an icon itself of Canadian culture (CBC Archives, 2006). By 1976, urbanization forced the Eaton's company to stop issuing mail-order catalogues, and the company declared bankruptcy and folded its department stores in 1999.

The Eaton's company is personified through Monsieur Eaton, with symbols of Englishness and upper class status surrounding him. Monsieur is sitting at his desk, wearing a bowler hat and a monocle, with an umbrella hung on a coat-rack behind him. He is pouring himself a cup of tea like a proper early-20th century capitalist English gentleman. On his desk sit two banners of the Toronto Maple Leafs (the banner of the English Canadian hockey team).

Paradigmatic structures in narratives are often based on binary oppositions (Bertrand & Hughes, 2005, p. 207). In this scene, class and cultural differences operate. Roch's mother is positioned as the French-Canadian *habitant* living in a rural, simple home. Monsieur Eaton is the powerful English businessman, oversee-

ing an industrialized factory in his urban office. The evident reading of this scene is that Monsieur Eaton and the Toronto sweater represent the power of the English to suppress the French Canadians, and to control the boy's fate. Also significant is that fact that the Montreal Canadiens sweater had to be ordered from Toronto. The film uses a shot/reverse-shot convention to structure the mother and son's argument, focusing mostly on the mother's point of view. The mother instills in Roch the fear of offending the Anglophone magnate Monsieur Eaton.

The sense of being too small in a world that is too big. The sense of being victims.
The conviction that one is suffering because of a fundamental injustice.

—Roch Carrier, *Our Lives With the Rocket*, p. 31

Again, the story was written in 1979, when significant numbers of English businesses moved to Toronto. Since then, many have criticized the sovereignty movement for the decline of Montreal's once vibrant economy, especially in relation to Toronto (Coffey, 1999).

Finally, in terms of the impact of the music in this sequence, the chord modulation at the end is significant. The modulation to a relative minor chord can be read as Québec changing but still maintaining a relation to Canada. Had the modulation been to a different key, one could argue that the message would have been a support for a complete break from Canada.

In the next sequence, the cultural tensions represented in the story culminate, in Roch's 'real life' on the rink, in a somewhat ambiguous resolution.

Film sequence III: 7:28-8:41

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
7:28	Fade in: EXT. mid-shot of boards of a hockey rink.	When I arrived at the skating rink in my blue sweater —
7:33	Roch's face and stick peek up tentatively from behind the boards.	all the Maurice Richards —
7:37	Roch jumps onto the ice blushing, smiling uncomfortably and waving weakly.	in red, white and blue
7:39	Five boys skate in from behind camera, first boy pointing and speaking angrily at Roch	came and look at me.
7:40	Cut to: shot-reverse/shot. Faces of seven	The referee blew -

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
	boys shouting angrily with frost emanating from mouths	
7:42	Cut to: close-up of referee, glasses, earmuffs, red gloves, blowing a whistle	his whistle. [sound of whistle]
7:44	Cut to: long shot of corner of empty rink.	And I went to take —
7:45	Roch skates onto the screen (facing camera) in ready position	my usual position.
7:48	A man in a Maurice Richard sweater skates in front of Roch with hand up	The coach came over —
7:50	waves to offscreen another player jumps onto ice and skates over, while coach points Roch to leave. Roch skates off dejectedly	and told me that I could be on the second line.
7:53	[fade out slowly]	By the third period —
7:55	Roch sits on boards, stick beside him, hands holding up face, sadly looking to the left	I still had not played.
7:56	Players skate in front of Roch (left to right, right to left). Roch's eyes follow them. A scuffle between the two players.	one of the defensemen
8:00	Roch's eyes and mouth open wide and his hand grasps his stick.	It started to bleed —
8:01	Close-up of player	

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
	crying as he skates by the camera	
8:02	Roch jumps happily onto the ice, with stick in air.	And I jump onto the ice!
8:03	Cut to: long shot of Roch skating with stick raised above his head with both hands, then slides to a stop toward the camera.	My moment had come!
8:05		[sound of whistle]
8:06	Roch looks surprised, hand pointing, whistle blowing and front of referee appears from right side of screen	
8:08		When the referee saw my Maple Leaf sweater –
8:10	Referee lifts his five fingers toward Roch	he gave me a penalty —
8:11	Five other players fade in behind Roch. Roch turns around. The five players fade out.	because there were already five players —
8:14	Roch gestures angrily	That was too much.
8:16	Roch's cheeks turn red as we see he speaks	It was too unfair.
8:18	Roch's face suddenly moves forward to take over the whole screen	This is persecution!
8:20	Full shot of Roch, still speaking, tugs at his sweater	It's just because of my blue sweater
8:23	Roch lifts his stick high	And out of spite —
8:25	Roch throws his stick	I crash -

<u>Time</u>	<u>Visual content</u>	<u>Narration, dialogue and other sound</u>
	heavily onto the ice in front of him	[sound of stick breaking]
8:26	Fade to close up of stick pieces falling to the ice	my stick against the ice so hard —
8:29	Roch's figure fades back in behind the stick pieces	that it broke.
8:30	Roch bends down to pick up the pieces	I bent down to pick up the pieces.
8:33	Shadow appears from behind camera. Roch looks up with fear.	
8:35	Stands up, camera is between the skates of the curate/ref, huge compared to Roch	When I got up —
8:36	[cont.]	The young curate, on skates was standing —
8:41	Cut to curate, camera position low, curate looming	in front of me.

Reading

This is probably the most complex scene in *The Hockey Sweater*. Up until now, the reading of the text can be understood as a straightforward allegory of French and English Canadian society: the mother represents the French Canadian people, Maurice Richard is the hope for the French Nationalists, the referee is the law and the Church, and Monsieur Eaton is the English heading the industries. However in this last scene, a layer of ambiguity is added. It isn't clear whose anger the protagonist is releasing—the French Canadians' or the English Canadians.' It also isn't clear if Roch was given the penalty deservedly—for too many men on the ice ("the law")—or as a persecutory consequence of changing sides.

To understand the scene, it is important to distinguish between the author/memoirist and the protagonist in the story (see Chatman, 1991). Roch (the boy protagonist) is used by Roch (the author) as a device to communicate meanings in coded statements (Paz, 1970). In this sequence, Roch and his friends invert the structure of the oppressed French and the oppressing English (and church).

Roch wears the symbol of Englishness, the Toronto Maple Leafs sweater. The

maple leaf is, of course, also the symbol of Canada. And his society of boys in Montreal Canadiens sweaters responds to the sign of Englishness in their friend with blatant hostility, or as Roch puts it, “This is persecution!” Roch and his friends “lived in three places—the school, the church, and the skating rink—but our real life was on the skating rink.” In his “real life,” Roch was persecuted for bringing in the hated English. Is it an uncanny projection of the suffering of the French-Canadians in 1946? Or is it a forecasting of what is to come in the sovereignty movement, a reflection of the Anglophones’ feelings as they fled the province during the Québec diaspora in the 1970s and 1980s?

French Canadians are treated unfairly, they are threatened with ruin. They feel inferior, like outcasts; in their discomfort there’s a visceral pride at having survived so many misfortunes, and there’s also an atavistic anger. More than a century and a half of submission has held them back, but one day that force will explode.

—Roch Carrier, *Our Lives With the Rocket*, p. 41

Finally, it is important to note the role of the church in *The Hockey Sweater* as authority, both on the ice as referee and as the greater power, where the boy must atone for his sin of not accepting his perceived persecution. Although the focus of Québec politics has been on the linguistic division, the Church has played a significant role: insisting that French Canadians be kept from learning English, from reading books, and from getting involved in economic industries.

The priests believe that their flock will be safer there than in the cities where they were exposed to materialism, Protestantism and English.

—Roch Carrier, *Our Lives With the Rocket*, p. 29

The story’s resolution sees the boy Roch praying in the church, asking God to “to send, as quickly as possible, moths that would eat up my Toronto Maple Leafs sweater” (p. 81).

Conclusion

What does *The Hockey Sweater* mean about Canada today? On one level, *The Hockey Sweater* is about a boy who wants to play hockey like his hero, Maurice Richard. On another level, it is a story that depicts the animosity between the French and the English and returns us to a time when Québec’s politics caused much tension and confusion in Canada.

The Hockey Sweater is one of Canada’s national treasures, capturing the complexity of its cultural and linguistic tensions in both celebration and critique. Roch Carrier doesn’t tell the reader what to believe about Canada, but his story offers us an entry point and a human perspective through which to think about one country’s identity. Roch Carrier went on to run in 1998 as a candidate for Québec’s Liberal Party.

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